



The Third Sunday of Easter (B)
April 15, 2018
The Rev. Dr. Christian Brocato, Rector

+May the words of my mouth and the meditations of our hearts be acceptable to you, O God, our Strength and Redeemer. Amen.

Headline news stories early last week contained more than just news coming from Washington, New York or Syria. NASA reported a new probe for more planets entitled TESS, Transitioning Exoplanet Survey Satellite. This new mission hopes to uncover many more planets in the solar system which would increase our knowledge of the universe.

The NASA story read: “TESS (The Transiting Exoplanet Survey Satellite) will discover thousands of exoplanets in orbit around the brightest stars in the sky. In a two-year survey of the solar neighborhood, TESS will monitor more than 200,000 stars...” The “survey will identify planets ranging from Earth-sized to gas giants...” WOW! Astronomers will be in heaven with that description and the potential findings of the project. (<https://tess.gsfc.nasa.gov/>) Star gazers among us may also be in heaven, so to speak. When I read this announcement, I have to admit that I felt something deep inside, a kind of excitement that reminded me of childhood.

Can you remember a time in your adult life which engendered childlike excitement? Remember those times when there was an almost innate exuberance that came from deep within? Some of our children may have experienced that when the double doors of the Parish House opened on Easter Sunday. The Annual Easter Egg Hunt was a great success. There were eggs everywhere with children’s eyes wide open with great enthusiasm: Multi-colored plastic eggs filled with carefully selected candy and goodies. It was terrific!

The world in which we live is not exactly one in which we experience daily shots of exuberant joy. So when we can find joy or when we can tap in to a former feeling of joy, we just might want to cease the moment for all kinds of reasons.

Following the Resurrection of Jesus and his post-Resurrection appearances, the world of the disciples was possibly a world of exuberant joy. I believe that the disciples must surely have been able to tap into past memories of joy when following Jesus. Jesus promised a path to life, freedom from sin and life forever. After all, Jesus proclaimed and lived a life of promise, freedom, forgiveness and reconciliation. Surely there was joy in embracing him and his message.

As followers of Jesus today, are we not called to a world where all people can experience joy through us because of our relationship with Jesus and our celebration of the Resurrection? I pray that the answer is “yes” for most if not all of us.

Today’s post-Resurrection account of Jesus begins with a gentle “Peace be with you.” To help relieve fears and anxieties, Jesus straight away offered his followers ‘peace’ and offers us ‘peace’ as well.

Finding peace within us and in the turbulent world in which we live is not always an easy task, is it? It certainly isn’t for me. There are simply times in my life when juggling schedules, being overbooked with meetings, dealing with doctor’s appointments or insurance claims can be overwhelming. And then, there are the national and global news stories which are daunting at best and deeply disturbing one after the other.

In the midst of life, Jesus says, “Peace be with you”. How do we find peace within us, and does today’s Gospel provide insight for us as we seek peace and comfort in and through our relationship with Jesus?

I find it helpful to read and to ponder that the disciples were not totally convinced that the post-resurrection appearances of Jesus were the ‘real deal.’ We know that they were afraid and even hid from the authorities because of that fear. In addition, scholars debate what many consider to have been the “glorified body” of Jesus after his Resurrection. So, not immediately recognizing him would have made sense.

You may remember that the disciples didn’t recognize Jesus the night of the Resurrection on the road to Emmaus. It took the “breaking of the bread” for them to realize that their Jesus was the Jesus who was before them and the Jesus who was not found in the tomb on that Sunday morning after his crucifixion. In today’s account, Jesus realizes the skepticism of the disciples and suggests that he eat fish to help prove that it was he whom they followed and whom they loved.

An article I read last week dealt with the body of Jesus after his Resurrection. It stated that “While the risen body is indeed physical, this authentic, real body possesses new properties of a glorious body: not limited by space and time but able to be present how and when he wills; for Christ’s humanity can no longer be confined to earth and belongs henceforth only to the Father’s divine realm” (CCC 645). (<http://newtheologicalmovement.blogspot.com/2011/04/is-glorified-body-of-jesus-physical.html>)

Perhaps, this isn’t so important in our day-to-day faith journey. To identify with the disciples as they encountered the resurrected Jesus, we might want to consider their skepticism or at least their confusion. When Jesus miraculously appeared to Mary Magdalene outside the tomb, or to the disciples on their way to Emmaus or to Thomas who had not seen Jesus in a previous appearance, the sudden presence of Jesus would likely be startling to the best of us.

On a concrete daily level, can we say that we have seen Jesus? Has there ever been a time in your life in which you have seen Jesus? I believe the answer is “yes”, we have seen Jesus.

We have seen Jesus in one another. We have seen him in the Eucharist we share, the bread and wine which become the Body and Blood of Jesus while remaining bread and wine.

We have seen Jesus in the faces of innocent children in our Church School. We have seen Jesus in our neighbors who we welcome on Sunday mornings for warm food and fellowship in our Breakfast Café. We have seen Jesus in our sisters and brother walking down South Division in need of so many things to survive. We have seen Jesus in the suffering of women, men and children in Syria and other parts of the world.

You see, we have seen Jesus because each and every human person is God’s creation and imbued with a divine spark. The Christian Tradition teaches us that we are made in the image and likeness of God. This gives me pause and perhaps gives you pause as well. If we truly believe that all of us are God’s creation, then, are we not called to love one another as God loves us? Then, are we not called to celebrate the Resurrection of Jesus and the promise of life for us and all God’s people?